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RUEHPS/USOFFICE PRISTINA PRIORITY 0203  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY  
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RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 0836  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAKU 000192

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/05/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PBTS](#) [MARR](#) [MASS](#) [MOPS](#) [KPAO](#) [AJ](#)  
SUBJECT: AZERBAIJAN WITHDRAWING PEACEKEEPERS FROM KOSOVO

REF: A. BAKU 00150

[1](#)B. BAKU 00129

Classified By: DCM Donald Lu for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (U) This is an action request; see paragraph 5.

[1](#)2. (C) The Azerbaijani Parliament voted on March 4 to withdraw its 34 peacekeepers from Kosovo. The decision has been expected for several days, as local press and several MP's publicly stated as early as February 26 that President Aliyev requested that Parliament take this step. According to Emboff who was at Parliament during the vote, Parliamentary Speaker Oqtay Asadov and Deputy Speaker Ziyafat Asgarov introduced the bill and limited discussion when several MPs called for an immediate vote. The vote on the resolution was 87 votes in favor, three votes against, and two abstentions. We believe this decision is driven by Baku's concern that Kosovo's declaration of independence creates the perception of a precedent that could undermine Azerbaijan's position with respect to the Nagorno-Karabakh (NK) conflict. GOAJ officials and Azerbaijani society in general are viewing developments in Kosovo primarily through the lens of NK (ref a).

[1](#)3. (C) In addition to the public indications that the GOAJ would withdraw its peacekeepers from Kosovo, Foreign Minister Mammadyarov told the Ambassador on February 12 that he personally would push for this step. Despite the strong GOAJ resolve to withdraw the peacekeepers, both Mammadyarov and Deputy Foreign Minister Araz Azimov have privately indicated that the GOAJ may consider sending these peacekeepers to Afghanistan or Iraq because the GOAJ does not want to diminish Azerbaijan's total peacekeeping contributions (ref b).

[1](#)4. (C) Azimov told the Ambassador during a meeting on February 29 that he planned to recommend to FM Mammadyarov that the Azerbaijani peacekeepers who would inevitably be withdrawn from Kosovo be sent to Afghanistan. He said he did not know what the ultimate outcome would be, but he believed that the FM would likely be supportive of this position as well. Furthermore, he noted that the decision was a purely political one and that there are no "special feelings" for the Serbs. He underscored that the Azerbaijan "did not want to lower its peacekeeping profile." He also was unable to specify the logistical or legislative mechanisms by which

such a lateral transfer could take place. Galib Israfilov, an MFA office director who reports to Azimov, told us that while the GOAJ could potentially send more peacekeepers to Afghanistan or Iraq he cautioned against the idea that this might occur quickly because this step would involve separate political and military discussions within the GOAJ. Mammadyarov and Azimov separately have asked for a U.S. statement indicating that Kosovo is not a precedent for unresolved conflicts in the South Caucasus or Moldova, explicitly disassociating Kosovo's status from NK.

15. (SBU) Action request: We already are receiving press inquiries regarding U.S. reaction to Azerbaijan's decision to withdraw its peacekeeping troops from Kosovo. The Department's guidance -- both for use in private meetings with GOAJ officials -- and also for press inquiries -- is requested.  
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